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Security Council

Seventy-second year

Provisional

8078th meeting
Thursday, 26 October 2017, 3.45 p.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Llorentty Solíz
	China	Mr. Shen Bo
	Egypt	Mr. Kandeel
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	Italy	Mr. Biagini
	Japan	Mr. Kawamura
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Sadykov
	Russian Federation	Mr. Iliichev
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Sweden	Mr. Skau
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Allen
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mr. Bermúdez

Agenda

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2017/870 and S/2017/870/Corr.1)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Reports of the Secretary-General on the Sudan and South Sudan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2017/870 and S/2017/870/Corr.1)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of South Sudan and the Sudan to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the following briefers to participate in this meeting: Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to documents S/2017/870 and S/2017/870/Corr.1, which contain the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei.

I now give the floor to Mr. Zouev.

Mr. Zouev: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on the situation in Abyei and the ongoing efforts to support the implementation of the agreement between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area of 20 June 2011. I shall also provide an update on the status of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, as requested in resolution 2352 (2017).

Conflict in the Abyei Area continues to follow four patterns. First, the traditional source of conflict between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya continues to be the issue of access to grazing land and water. The conflict prevention and mitigation strategy adopted by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) has been effective in reducing large-scale violence. The mission's success in managing those issues has encouraged the return of the Ngok Dinka, with an estimated 15,000 returnees being assisted by the humanitarian community.

Secondly, criminality in and around the Amiet common market, which has become an important economic hub, has been shown to have the potential to exacerbate intercommunal tensions as the two communities mingle in the market and the surrounding areas. The spike in July and August in intercommunal violence related to the market has dropped sharply in the wake of UNISFA's proactive engagement in de-escalating tensions between the Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities. Unfortunately, a few violent incidents have occurred since the publication of the Secretary-General's report (S/2017/870 and S/2017/870). On 13 October two Ngok Dinka died and three more were wounded at the Amiet common market after unknown armed assailants opened fire. UNISFA responded promptly with a pursuit and initial medical treatment. Thirdly, violence continues to be associated with petty crime, largely as a result of the adverse economic situation in the Abyei Area, where there is a lack of livelihood opportunities and a large presence of arms. And lastly, the presence of armed groups has the potential to influence and polarize communities, thereby inflaming intercommunal tensions.

While UNISFA operations have continued to enhance peace and stability within the Abyei Area, intercommunal tensions persist in the absence of progress in the implementation of the agreement of 20 June 2011. Disagreement on the joint interim institutions continues to hinder their establishment. The Abyei Joint Oversight Committee did not convene in the last week of July as was agreed on at its meeting in May. The African Union called for a follow-up meeting of the Committee in Addis Ababa on 16 August, but it was postponed the day before the scheduled date at the request of South Sudan, which cited the need to await the outcome of an expected meeting between the Presidents of South Sudan and the Sudan. The Presidents have been expected to meet since July, and that meeting is crucial, but a date has yet to be announced, although we hope it will be shortly, if not today. The efforts of the African Union continue, which has called for an extraordinary meeting of the Oversight Committee on 9 November.

The agreement of 30 July 2011 established the border monitoring and verification mission, and the

Cooperation agreement of 27 September 2012 on security arrangements operationalized the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. Nearly six years later, the Mechanism remains at an initial operating capability. Despite the lack of progress, both countries and the African Union view the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism as essential and, in an important show of common purpose, jointly asked Council members to retain UNISFA's support to the Mechanism in their letter of 23 September.

In that context, I would like to share with the Council the progress made on the benchmarks for the full operating capability of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism , namely, the regular meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism , the resumption of border demarcation discussions, the resolution of the dispute over the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and full freedom of movement for Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations. With regard to the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, both parties have stated that concrete action could only follow the anticipated meeting of the Presidents. The meeting of the Joint Security Committee in early June did not take place, with mutual accusations of support for each other's rebel movements. The Committee was created to address exactly those kinds of disputes, which makes its current suspension particularly discouraging.

I also regret to report that border demarcation discussions have not resumed, nor have the documents for the non-binding opinion on disputed and claimed areas been handed over. However, in a positive step to advance the implementation of decisions taken at the latest meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, held in May, the parties participated in an initial joint aerial reconnaissance mission in September, facilitated by UNISFA, to identify temporary observation sites within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, in the vicinity of the agreed border crossing corridors. We hope that both parties can come together again to further the border demarcation discussions.

There continues to be an agreement on the centreline of the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone, a decision of the extraordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism in Addis Ababa on 14 October 2015, thereby providing the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism with a defined area of operations. Since the latest resolution, there has been considerable progress in terms of full freedom of movement for Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism operations, with the helipad at Gok Machar now fully functional and expedited approval procedures in place to clear aerial patrols.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that UNISFA has clearly had a stabilizing role in Abyei and along the border region between the Sudan and South Sudan. Neither the Abyei Area nor the border area have seen any major confrontation between the forces of the two countries. I urge both Governments to consolidate the gains achieved by UNISFA at the local level by actively engaging in discussions to resolve the deadlock over establishing the temporary arrangements that should lead to determining the final status of Abyei.

Progress on the operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism remains dependent upon the active collaboration of the parties, and is yet to meet all the benchmarks set by the Secretary-General to proceed to full operating capability. Both countries pledged to address challenges facing the Mechanism in the joint letter of 23 September I mentioned, highlighting the importance of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism as a confidence-building measure. In that context, we encourage the parties to use the mechanisms they have established to address their security issues and normalize their relations.

In that regard, it is imperative to preserve the achievements of relative stability realized through the work of UNISFA, both towards maintaining peace and stability in the Abyei Area and in preventing confrontations along the Sudan-South Sudan border area. Bearing that in mind, I would like to echo the recommendations of the Secretary-General for the Security Council to extend UNISFA's mandate for an additional six months.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Zouev for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: I thank you, Mr. President, for this opportunity to brief the Security Council on progress in the implementation of resolution 2046 (2012), which concerns outstanding bilateral issues between the Sudan and South Sudan and the conflict in the states of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

As relations between the two countries have continued to be tense, it was hoped that the meeting

between Presidents Al-Bashir and Kiir that was planned to take place in Khartoum during the reporting period would provide guidance on the way forward, at least on the stalled implementation of the 2012 agreements. But that meeting did not materialize, at least during the reporting period.

The internal conflicts in the Sudan and South Sudan, coupled with the mistrust between the two countries, have continued to impede the proper implementation of the agreements and the normalization of their bilateral relations. At the extraordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, held in Addis Ababa from 14 to 15 May, both Governments recommitted to the resumption of regular meetings and to the implementation of the decisions taken at their last meeting, held in Khartoum a year earlier.

However, the ordinary meeting of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism agreed to be held at the end of June did not take place, after both Governments once again exchanged accusations of harbouring each other's rebels. An extraordinary Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting convened by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel is expected to take place on 1 November. In my engagement with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, I have reiterated that the agreements on security arrangements and border issues cannot be implemented without regular meetings of the Joint Political and Security Mechanism, the main bilateral mechanism empowered to take decisions regarding security and the border.

The monitoring of the border remains critical to peace efforts, as border violations have the potential to be a flashpoint of military confrontation between the countries. In line with the July 2011 agreement on the border monitoring support mission, both sides acknowledge the importance of border monitoring. If fully implemented, the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism can help them prevent violations and cross-border incursions by armed groups, contain the cross-border circulation of weapons and assist in building mutual trust, particularly in the light of the mutual accusations of harbouring rebels. It can also serve to protect the flanks of the Abyei Area.

While there has been limited progress on security and border issues, the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan have continued to show more appetite for sustained bilateral cooperation in the oil sector. In September, the Ministers of Petroleum of the two countries agreed in Khartoum on the resumption of oil production in the Unity state oilfields, which had stopped with the outbreak of the war in 2013. The Sudan would provide technical assistance and electricity and accommodate oil workers at its base camp in Heglig.

In line with the agreement on trade and trade-related Issues, the two Governments agreed in September to boost border trade and approved the export of 54 Sudanese products to South Sudan through five border crossing points yet to be identified. It is expected that a meeting of customs and immigration officials will be organized to operationalize the agreement, while the branch of the Sudan's central bank at Kosti has been identified to facilitate transactions. The contemplated Joint Political and Security Mechanism meeting at the end of this month is intended to expedite the establishment of the first crossing points.

The Sudan also continued to facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid to South Sudan by allowing the World Food Programme to deliver food assistance on 5 October to Aweil.

With the lifting of United States sanctions on the Sudan, South Sudan has expressed interest in a joint approach to the international community, including a creditor outreach strategy arrangement as contemplated in the agreement on economic matters, which has not yet been implemented. In my future engagement with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, I will encourage them to build on their sustained cooperation on oil and their interest in enhancing their economic and commercial cooperation to implement the agreements on security arrangements and border issues in the same spirit.

Since the independence of South Sudan, the most prominent outstanding territorial issue between the Sudan and South Sudan has been the question of sovereignty over the Abyei Area. After an interval that followed the upsurge in violence in Abyei in 2011, resulting in the displacement of the population there, and following the independence of South Sudan later that year, the Security Council adopted resolution 2046 (2012), which urges the parties to cease all hostilities and withdraw their forces. The main concern of the members of the Security Council then was to avoid the risk of greater conflagration and, in the words of the United States representative,

> "returning to the horrors of the past and [taking] the entire region with them" (*S/PV.6764, p. 1*).

Today, thanks notably to the sustained and fruitful efforts of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), for which Ethiopia should be commended, the risk of relapse into conflict between the Sudan and South Sudan is low. The stabilizing role of UNISFA, described in detail in the briefing by my colleague Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev, should inform any decision the international community takes regarding Abyei and the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. The conflict prevention and mitigation strategy adopted by UNISFA and its engagement with both communities to foster dialogue and reconciliation have also been critical in averting an escalation of tensions.

In my view, the enabling role of UNISFA is crucial for any future progress on the implementation of the transitional agreements and the arrangements on the border, as well as the resumption of talks about the final status of Abyei. In my continuous engagement with the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan, I have urged them to build on the relative improvement in their relationship, including through bilateral meetings between President Al-Bashir and President Kiir, to take concrete measures to achieve progress on the joint administration of Abyei and to resume discussions about its final status.

Turning my attention to the conflict in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, if fully implemented, the road map agreement brokered last year by the African Union High-level Implementation Panel can lay the ground for lasting peace in the Sudan, as it contemplates a comprehensive solution to the conflicts in Darfur and the two areas through peace negotiations and national political dialogue resulting in a new, inclusive social contract.

Humanitarian aid delivery to the territories under the control of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North (SPLM-N) remains a major contentious issue and a road block between the Government of the Sudan and the SPLM-N. The Government of the Sudan has reiterated readiness to implement the so-called United States proposal on humanitarian access, which consists of the United States delivering medicine from within the Sudan to South Kordofan Blue Nile states by air. The new SPLM-N leadership stated that the position of the Movement on the matter has not changed and that it sticks to the delivery of a certain percentage of the humanitarian assistance directly from a neighbouring country to the areas under its control. In my future engagement with the parties, I intend to urge them to build on the current unilateral cessation of hostilities declared by both sides in the two areas and to resume talks on the basis of the United States proposal on humanitarian assistance, under the auspices of the High-level Implementation Panel.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Bermúdez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to express our gratitute for the briefings by Mr. Alexander Zouev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan.

I shall focus my statement on two points: first, specificallly on the work of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA); and secondly, the lack of concrete headway in implementing the agreements of 2011 and 2012 intended to resolve the conflict over the status of Abyei.

There can be no doubt that, since its establishment in 2011 and to date, UNISFA has played a stabilizing role in Abyei and along the entire border between the Sudan and South Sudan, as clearly pointed out in the report (S/2017/870) of the Secretary-General's report. Although some violent incidents have been reported over the past few months, the security situation in the Abyei Area has remained relatively calm, to a great extent thanks to the role played by UNISFA. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that the situation remains unstable due to the lack of progress made in the political process. In that regard, I would like to express our gratitude for the work of UNISFA. Thanks to its proactive stance and unflagging support for mediation initiatives and political dialogue, the mission has contributed enormously to the fact that there have been no major clashes between the armed forces of the two countries in the Abyei Area since 2011. In short, UNISFA has fulfilled the role that was expected of it — that is, establishing a secure environment in which the Sudan and South Sudan can resolve their differences through dialogue.

However, the peacekeeping mission has been hamstrung in achieving its full potential as a result of

the glaring lack of willingness to compromise by both parties to the conflict, which have not only incessantly put obstacles in the way of UNISFA's work, but have also failed to show tangible progress in implementing the agreements of 2011 and 2012, aimed at achieving a lasting solution to the status of Abyei.

That leads me to my second point, namely, to reiterate the primary responsibility borne by the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to fulfil the commitments they themselves undertook in those agreements. However much support the international community might offer the parties — as it has done throughout the years, in particular through the United Nations and the African Union — we reiterate that the responsibility for showing real progress in resolving the conflict lies primarily with both Governments.

We take note of the point made by Mr. Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, in his communication dated 23 October, where he referred to the latest efforts to convene meetings of the various mechanisms established under the 2011 and 2012 agreements, including the Abyei Joint Oversight Committee and the Joint Political and Security Mechanism. In that connection, we urge the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan to take advantage of the mechanisms that have been established to resolve outstanding issues and to implement the decisions taken. That is vital in order to promote good-neighbourly relations and avoid a relapse into conflict.

In conclusion, allow me to recall that resolution 2352 (2017), which the Security Council adopted in May and which set out the current mandate of UNISFA, is a conditional resolution. Through the resolution, it was decided that the continuation of UNISFA support tasks with regard to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism would end with that extension unless both parties demonstrated, via their actions, clear commitment and firm assurances for operationalizing the Mechanism. UNISFA's mandate expires in mid-November, which is why I repeat here what we stated at the time of the adoption of resolution 2352 (2017):

> "[l]et me clearly reaffirm that the future of this peacekeeping mission is now exclusively in the hands of the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan." (*S/PV.7939, p. 6*)

Mr. Llorentty Solíz (Plurinational State of Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): Bolivia is grateful to the French presidency for convening this briefing. It has been a long time since the Security Council held a public meeting on the situation in Abyei, and this format makes it possible for the entire membership to learn in greater detail about the work being done in the Area by the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). We also thank Assistant Secretary-General Alexander Zouev and Special Envoy Nicholas Haysom for the important information they have shared with us today.

Bolivia believes that the current state of relative stability in Abyei is a reflection of the efficient work of UNISFA, which is as important for the Sudan as it is for South Sudan, given the difficult time that the latter is experiencing due to the civil war afflicting the country. In that connection, we would like to commend the Ethiopian troops as well as United Nations personnel for their great work in Abyei.

Although we acknowledge the stability in the Area, we also recognize that the political, humanitarian and security situations continue to pose challenges. UNISFA responds where it can, but its abilities to respond are limited by various factors outside of its control. It is clear to us that it is up to the Governments of both countries to make headway in the development of measures allowing for the implementation of the 2011 agreement and the final status of the Area.

In that connection, we underscore the good offices role played by UNISFA in terms of mediation to encourage dialogue and rekindle the political process between both countries, as well as to promote understanding and reconciliation between the Misseriya and Ngok Dinka communities. The coexistence of those two communities, whether through commercial activities or the setting up of community protection committees, helps to establish the bonds of trust that are fundamental among the inhabitants of the Area.

Although the security situation is relatively stable, it continues to be unpredictable. Despite the reduction in the number of violent incidents in comparison with the period covered by the present report (S/2017/870) of the Secretary-General), and taking into account the update provided by the Assistant-Secretary-General at this meeting, we must continue working to further reduce the tensions in the Amiet common market. As we know, it is the economic heart of the Area and helps to improve the relationship between the parties.

As reported by the Secretary-General, there are many needs that must be met to provide humanitarian aid. The arrival of displaced persons from South Sudan has led to an urgent situation that UNISFA and other humanitarian actors are struggling to grapple with. There are still problems in terms of access to education, health, safe drinking water and food security. Headway needs to be made in consolidating the institutions that should properly administer the Area and guarantee the provision of basic services to the people of Abyei. UNISFA cannot, and should not, substitute the role that the State.

Despite the problems being experienced, we underscore the fact that educational activities are currently under way to provide training to mitigate the risks posed by explosive remnants of war. Such efforts, which have reached almost 65,000 Abyei inhabitants, constitute an important component in establishing lasting peace in the Area. Moreover, we would highlight the joint work of UNISFA and the United Nations Mine Action Service to confiscate and destroy weapons, detect and eliminate explosive munitions and destroy explosive remnants of war along priority routes. The two latter are essential for delineating the terrain coordinates of border transport corridors.

In a joint letter we received on 23 September, the Governments of the Sudan and South Sudan publicly expressed their willingness to implement resolutions 1990 (2011) and 2352 (2017). That seems to us a positive sign of the rapprochement between the two parties, but it is vital that this commitment be put into practice. We hope that these issues will be the subject of consensus at the summit between the Presidents of the Sudan and South Sudan, which we hope will take place as soon as possible. We urge the parties to demonstrate leadership and political determination to move forward with serious negotiations that will ensure the operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, as called for in resolution 2352 (2017), as well as determine the final status of the Area in line with the 2011 agreement.

Finally, we see that there are still many challenges to overcome in Abyei. We hope that the Security Council will remain unified on this issue, while listening to the positions of the parties involved, the troop-contributing country, regional organizations and the Secretariat. We must not lose sight of our principal mandate and continue to work to help these countries achieve peace, stability and well-being for their inhabitants.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Sudan.

Mr. Mohamed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you, Sir, on your presidency of the Security Council this month and I wish you every success. Moreover, I would like to pay tribute to your predecessor, the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia, for his wise stewardship of the Council's proceedings in the past month. Through you as President of the Security Council, as well as through the President of the General Assembly and the Secretary-General, I would also like to offer to the Government and the people of Chad our deepest condolences for the death of the Chadian peacekeepers in northern Mali.

I also take this opportunity to renew Sudan's commitment to cooperate with the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) in order to enable it to carry out its mandate set out in resolution 1990 (2011). I express my thanks and appreciation to His Excellency the Secretary-General and we thank him for the Report on the situation in Abyei (see S/2017/870) presented to the Council. I thank Mr. Alexander Zuev, Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Special Envoy for Sudan and South Sudan, Mr. Haysom, for their briefings.

I would like to reaffirm the security stability that Abyei is experiencing and the progress that has been achieved in enhancing the principles of peaceful coexistence between the Messiria and the Ngok, which has been confirmed in the Report presented today (S/2017/870) as well as in all of the reports presented to the Council during the past period. This stability is a direct result of the extensive governmental and social efforts that have been made in addition to the positive role that UNISFA plays and has always played since its creation.

The Government of Sudan confirms its commitment to all of the agreements signed with the Republic of South Sudan, starting with the Abyei Protocol of 2004, the Agreement between the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement on temporary arrangements for the administration and security of the Abyei Area, which we signed on 20 June 2011 and the Cooperation Agreement between the two States, signed on 27 September 2012.

Here we call upon our brothers and sisters in the Government of South Sudan to enhance their serious engagement with the Government of Sudan and the African Union in order to speed up the process of forming the Abyei institutions stipulated by the 20 June 2011 Agreement in order to determine the final status of Abyei. This is truly and only in the hands of the Presidents of Sudan and South Sudan, according to the agreements signed between the two countries.

My delegation reaffirms its position that the path towards sustainable peace and stability in Abyei and throughout the border area between Sudan and South Sudan is based on two main elements, namely the implementation of both the Agreement of 20 June 2011 and of all points contained in the Cooperation Agreement signed between Sudan and South Sudan on 27 September 2012.

The Agreement of 20 June 2011 stipulates the formation of a joint administration for Abyei as well as a joint legislative council and a joint police force. These are basic institutions that are indispensable to the management of the area and in offering the necessary services to its citizens, as well as enhancing peaceful coexistence betweent the different social elements. There is also a need to create the necessary conditions in order to peacefully establish a final status for Abyei based on the 2004 Abyei Protocol. This Protocol stipulates holding a joint referendum in a manner that meets the aspirations of all stakeholders by finding a win-win formula that satisfies everyone.

Furthermore, the Cooperation Agreement has established strong foundations for the normalization of ties between Sudan and South Sudan and to enhance the level of cooperation between the two States in all aspects. It also stipulates the need for sustained peace between them.

The Agreement covers vital areas that are important to the present and future relationship between the two countries, such as oil, trade, debt, borders, security arrangements, citizen affairs and other important matters. However, the lack of enthusiasm among our brothers in South Sudan for implementing all of those points, with the exception of the oil agreement, has prevented the achievement of the desired results. My delegation hopes that the Government of the Republic of South Sudan will fulfil its pledges to implement all of these agreements, especially the agreement on security arrangements and all its facets.

Everyone, especially the members of the Security Council, knows that meeting security needs in any situation must come before meeting economic and other goals, as explicitly stated in resolution 2046 (2012), adopted in May 2012. It will require broadening the horizons of the relations between the two States in a manner that would guarantee cooperation, rise above any disaccord and fulfil the aspirations of the two sisterly nations to achieving peace, stability and development, as good neighbours.

My country confirms that the Sudan has never been the cause of obstacles to the work of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism or to restrict its movements. My delegation believes that the Mechanism is important to ensuring lasting peace along the joint borders of the Sudan and South Sudan, and must be maintained and activated in order to normalize ties between the two States. As Council members will recall, at the most recent meeting of the joint political and security mechanism between the Sudan and South Sudan, held on 14 and 15 May in Addis Ababa, stressed the centrality of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism:

(*spoke in English*)

> "The joint political and security mechanism stressed the centrality of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism for the peace and security of the Sudan and South Sudan. They pointed out that the absence of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism would be detrimental to and have detrimental effects on stability along the border and within both countries as a whole. In that regard, the meeting resolved that the parties must urgently take practical steps to activate the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism and facilitate its work."

(*spoke in Arabic*)

Moreover, the Sudan and South Sudan, as well as other relevant parties, have worked together since the Council's meeting in May. The Foreign Ministers of both countries sent a joint letter to the Council on 23 September in which they reaffirmed both countries' commitments to the activation of the Joint Border and Verification Monitoring Mechanism. Furthermore, both countries dispatched aerial patrols to the Mechanism and patrols in the four border crossing areas that were agreed upon for activation. In addition, an invitation was sent out for the meeting of the joint political and

security mechanism. It was also agreed to conduct the long-awaited visit by His Excellency President Salva Kiir Mayardit of South Sudan to Khartoum on Tuesday, 31 October. We hope that the meeting will result in the necessary progress in regard to the issues that remain outstanding between the two countries.

While we understand the concerns of those calling to end UNISFA support for the operational activities of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, we believe that the Mechanism is indispensable to maintaining stability in Abyei and along the border with South Sudan. Ending UNISFA support for the operational activities of the Mechanism could lead to developments that would threaten the gains that have been made through the joint efforts of all concerned — including the Security Council, which has endorsed the Mechanism — and reignite tensions. It would be tantamount to a collective punishment of those who have met their obligations and of those who have not, and of civilians in both countries. We therefore see little justification for ending support for those activities.

We believe that the way to revitalize and reanimate those activities is for the Council and the entire international community to make an extra effort to enhance dialogue and encourage both countries to fulfil their obligations in regard to creating a buffer demilitarized border zone and to removing all obstacles to the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. I confirm the full commitment and willingness of the Government of the Sudan to do its part to activate the Mechanism and implement the agreement on security arrangements of 27 September 2012 and other agreements signed with the Republic of South Sudan.

In conclusion, I would like to offer my sincere thanks and gratitude to all of our partners whose efforts facilitate UNISFA's work, in particular the Government of Ethiopia, the Peace and Security Council of the African Union, the African Union Commission and the African Union High-level Implementation Panel for the Sudan and South Sudan, as well as the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan. We also reiterate the Sudan's commitment to cooperating with UNISFA in fulfilling all its duties unhindered, pursuant to resolution 1990 (2011) and subsequent relevant resolutions.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of South Sudan.

Mr. Malwal (South Sudan): Mr. President, we are delighted and honoured to speak before the Security Council for the second time under your leadership.

My delegation would like to join in expressing our condolences to the people and the Government of Chad for the untimely death of their troops. I would also like to acknowledge the Assistant Secretary-General for Rule of Law and Security Institutions, Mr. Alexander Zouev, and Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan, both of whom are here with us today.

My delegation welcomes the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Abyei (S/2017/870) and the progress in the implementation of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA). My delegation accepts the report, not only for its comprehensiveness but, more importantly, for the glimmer of hope for what could happen to the people of Abyei if the international community could build on the current relative tranquility that the report talks about.

My delegation would be remiss if we did not pay a well-deserved tribute to the Ethiopian men and women of UNISFA in general, and in particular to the Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, for their unwavering commitment to keeping peace and harmony among the people of Abyei. As the report conveys, it is the creativity of the Ethiopian troops in Abyei that has brought relative peace to the Area. As we appreciate their commitment to and sacrifices for the people of Abyei, we would like to appeal to the international community to maintain the much-needed support for those troops.

We would also like to thank the Council for the positive role and attention that it continues to pay to the issue of Abyei. Needless to say, its continued engagement will be crucial until the case of Abyei is positively resolved to the satisfaction of both countries.

In that regard, I would like to reiterate South Sudan's commitment to engaging the Republic of the Sudan in renewed efforts towards finding an agreed solution to the issue of Abyei. Such renewed engagement was conveyed to the Council in the joint letter that was sent by the Foreign Ministers of South Sudan and the Sudan on 23 September. I would like to remind the Council that, in that letter, both Ministers stated:

> "We would like to reconfirm to you our resolve to remove the obstacles and address challenges facing the operationalization of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism. We would like to affirm to you our readiness to uphold the commitments we made in the Agreement on the Border Monitoring Support Mission of 2011 and the Agreement on Security Arrangements of 2012, and to hold the meetings of the joint political and security mechanism, and the joint security mechanism, and begin a political process to unlock the deadlock on Abyei and the borders, as urged by Security Council resolution 2352 (2017)."

In the spirit of the aforementioned letter and as the report of the Secretary-General notes, South Sudan has granted the operations of the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism full freedom of movement. The helipad at Gok Machar is now fully functional and expedited approval procedures to clear flights for the Mechanism's aerial patrols have been granted. The report further notes that the cancellation rate for aerial patrols is at its lowest since its establishment in 2013, having decreased from 56 per cent to 22 per cent, and that many of those cancellations mentioned were due to bad weather. The report also notes the positive progress made towards full operational capacity of the Mechanism. Both parties have accepted the proposal of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) to establish four temporary observation sites within the Safe Demilitarized Border Zone and sent their respective monitors to start a joint reconnaissance mission with UNISFA to identify the four temporary observation sites.

All of that demonstrates significant progress and the commitment of South Sudan to making the mandate of UNISFA, and in particular the Joint Border Verification and Monitoring Mechanism, functional. The Republic of South Sudan appreciates the role of the Mechanism in maintaining the effective operations of UNISFA, which in turn sustain harmonious coexistence in the area. Moreover, we are happy to report that there is serious and credible information that the expected visit of President Salva Kiir Mayardit to Khartoum will finally take place in the next few days.

Realistically, we must admit that there are serious differences between the two countries, and the aforementioned activities cannot replace the final resolution of the Abyei issue. In that regard, while we see the call to establish interim administrative structures in Abyei, we feel that it has been superseded by many events. Rather, we stand for a final settlement of the Abyei matter on the basis of African Union High-level Implementation Panel's proposal of 21 September 2013, which the African Union Peace and Security Council has accepted a number of times and for which it sought the support of the Security Council in its communiqué of 26 October 2013.

Finally, as the Council knows, serious differences on such a historic dispute usually take a long time to settle. We would like to appeal to the international community through the Security Council that in order to build on the limited peace and tranquility achieved so far by the Ethiopian peacekeepers, as the report indicates, certain fundamental humanitarian and social services ought to be provided for the people of Abyei. We appreciate the various early recovery and transition activities mentioned in the report, which include the rehabilitation of the Abyei Referral Hospital, the Abyei Women's Centre and the various livelihood ventures targeting young people and women. We encourage more such ventures, as providing livelihood for the young people of Abyei will help reduce the criminality that is caused by the economic situation.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.